

# Sentence Fragments

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A sentence requires

- A Subject (tells you *WHO* or *what* the sentence is about)
- A Verb (expresses action, tells what the subject *DOES*, links the subject to other elements in a sentence, or describes a state of being)  
*Note: Sometimes you may have more than one subject and/or more than one verb.*
- A Statement (a complete thought)
- Examples
  - > After class, Jason and I are meeting for lunch. (a compound subject)
  - > I have to work today from noon until ten o'clock. (one subject, one verb)
  - > The debate lasted for four hours and highlighted the different policies of each candidate. (two verbs)

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Just as a bowl that shatters to the floor may break into pieces, a sentence fragment is a piece of a sentence. It often lacks a verb. It may lack a subject. Or it could have a subject and verb but not express a complete thought.

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- Example: I going to the mall to shop  
(not complete v. phrase)
- Example: Spending lots of money at my favorite store (no subject)
- Example: While I am shopping (subject and verb are present but this group of words cannot stand alone independently and does not express a complete thought).

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- I heading to the mall (not a complete verb)
- After I finish my classes for the day (not a complete thought)
- For catching, I'm a baseball, (not a baseball (no subject or verb))
- Going to the country for the weekend (no subject and not a complete verb)

Note: If you write fragments in your essays, your teacher may write frag (a common editing symbol) in the margin to call attention to the error. You need to learn to recognize it and to be able to correct it.

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- Which of these is a sentence fragment?
- > He is tired.
- > She is lying. I lie.
- > Because she had experience.
- > Saddleback, El Camino, Coastline, and Cypress.
- > After lunch, I will leave.

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- If you selected the middle three, you are correct.
- He listened is a complete sentence for it has a subject and a verb and it expresses a complete thought.
- She telling a joke is a fragment for it does not have a complete verb. This could be corrected by adding "is" or "was": "he telling" or "was telling."
- Because she had experience is a fragment. Even though it has a subject and verb, it does not express a complete thought.
- Saddi back, El Camino, Coastline, and Cypress is a fragment because there is no subject or verb.
- After fun, I will leave is correct (has subject and verb and expresses a complete thought).

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- Let's look at the difference between an independent and a dependent clause. Each are groups of words containing a subject and a verb. However, an independent clause can stand alone as a sentence; it is independent. That way, Every sentence must have, therefore, at least one independent clause.

Remember: Each sentence must contain at least one independent clause.

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Some common words that indicate a dependent (or subordinate clause) are as follows:

- Because
- When
- Although
- Whenever
- Even though
- Since
- After
- Until
- If
- As
- Relative pronouns (who, which, that)

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- Because I have to get my car fixed.
- Although it appears to be running smoothly.
- Until you can pick me up from practice.
- When she jogged past the couple.
- If he is able to complete all his required classes.

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- If you write a dependent clause, you must attach it to an independent clause so that you have a grammatically correct sentence.

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You must attach them to an independent clause. Let's look at the fragments from the last slide.

- Because I have to get my car fixed, I will need to take the bus to school this week. (corrected)
- My car smells funny when I drive it although it appears to be running smoothly. (corrected)

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- I will study in the library until you can pick me up from practice. (corrected)
- When she jogged past the couple, she noticed that they were arguing. (corrected)
- Ryan will graduate this year if he is able to complete all his required classes. (corrected)

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Phrase Fragment: a phrase is a <sup>group</sup> of words without a subject and/or verb

Here are some examples:

- After the rain
- Into the fire
- Worked with clay
- A big, fluffy dog

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Add the missing subject or verb

Attach the phrase to sentence coming before or after (if appropriate).

- After the rain, a rainbow appeared.
- H rushed into the fire.
- She worked with clay.
- I would love to have a big, fluffy dog.

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- This type of fragment gives information about a sentence which came before. It usually is missing a subject or a verb or both. This type of fragment often begins with words and phrases such as these:

- As well as
- Basically
- Except
- Also
- For example
- For instance
- Including
- Like
- Such as
- Particularly

- As well as my sister Jan.
- Also, Chemistry 11 and World History.
- Especially apple pie with ice cream.
- For example, my experience last summer at the mall.
- Like my reaction to my allergy medicine.
- Including all my relatives and my neighbors.
- Except my boyfriend and my best friend.

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1. A ~~is~~ the missing subject or verb or both.
2. Attach the ~~object~~ <sup>subject</sup> to the ~~prepositional~~ <sup>main</sup> sentence.  
I am taking English, Math 200, and also Chemistry <sup>and</sup> and World History (Corrected)
- Many people have allergies to food, pollen, and also medications, like my reaction to my allergy medicine. (Corrected)
- I love many desserts, especially ~~apple~~ <sup>apple</sup> pie with ice cream. (Corrected)

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1. Phrase - a group of words that cannot stand alone. A phrase is missing a subject or verb or both.
2. Clause - a group of words that does contain a subject and a verb. There are two types.
  - > Independent Clause - can stand ~~alone~~ <sup>independently</sup>.
  - > Dependent Clause - cannot stand ~~alone~~ <sup>alone</sup> and must be attached to an independent clause.
3. Fragment - a piece of a sentence. It may lack a subject or verb or it may not be able to stand alone and does not express a complete thought. Every sentence must have at least one independent clause.

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You might notice sentence fragments in some types of writing. For instance, in the popular ~~book~~ <sup>novel</sup> *Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, the first chapter contains a number of fragments:

"Or at least distrust me." (3)  
 "Entrails. No hiding." (4)  
 "Just a squirrel." (7)  
 "Pretty dress," says Gale. (12)

Are these errors?

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Fragments can be acceptable in certain types of writing  
 – novels, short stories, informal writing, or other writing that records speech. For instance, you may find fragments

- > In dialogue: "Hell ." "Goodbye."
- > In questions and answers: "Coming?" "Sure."
- > In exclamations: "Hurrah! Oh, no! Yeah!"

• Important Note: Writers, such as Collins, do, at times, use fragments for dramatic effect. However, in the writing you do for classroom assignments, you should avoid writing sentence fragments.

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Add the missing subject or verb or both.

Sometimes (if it makes sense) you can attach the fragment to a sentence that comes before or after.

> It is important that you can recognize fragments in your writing and correct them as you edit your papers.

> If you are in the lab, please see an assistant for a quiz to test your knowledge of fragments.

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- Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. New York: Scholastic, 2008.
- Fluvier, Toby and Alan Hayakawa. *The Blair Handbook*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007.
- Gaetz, Lynne and Suneel Phadke. *The Writer's World*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006

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